

# Green Careers Toolkit



The **Green Careers Toolkit** resource was developed for the **Biodiversity Careers for University Students Programme**. Led by the World Wide Fund for Nature in South Africa (WWF-SA), it contributes to the goals of the Biodiversity Human Capital Development Strategy for 2010 to 2030, led by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and The Lewis Foundation (LF).

It was developed for the college and university career counsellor, lecturer and green club student leader to guide innovative initiatives for sharing green careers information to support students in decision making for learning and career pathways. It includes guidelines and suggestions to plan, convene and host the following green career guidance initiatives:



**1. Green Career Excursions** for students in remote areas of the country to visit potential employers and experience different aspects of green careers in the field and actual workplace. The toolkit offers guidance on:

- planning the green careers excursion; and
- hosting the job shadow experience as an employer.



**2. Green Career Guest Lectures and Lounges** involves biodiversity professionals visiting universities and sharing green careers information. These can take place in a formal lecture type setting or an informal space for students to meet and interact with these professionals. Suggestions are offered on:

- planning the green careers guest lecture;
- presenting the green careers guest lecture; and
- convening the green careers lounge.



**3. Green Career Exhibitions** display green careers information complemented by exhibitors who share further details. The toolkit offers suggestions on:

- sharing of green career exhibitions in career centres; and
- bigger career expos on campuses

These suggested career initiatives can be complemented by a series of **Green Career Resources** developed to support career decision-making amongst learners, students and employees.

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Authors: Glenda Raven, Lameez Eksteen and Zoe Visser

First published in 2014 by

GreenMatter Biodiversity Careers for University Students Programme



## GREEN CAREER EXCURSIONS

The green careers excursion is an innovative way to expose students to potential employers and careers in the field and workplace. These excursions are particularly useful for students from rural and more remote universities who do not have easy access to employers of green skills. Suggested over a period of five days, students visit different employers and spend time with professionals in the field or workplace, for job shadowing to experience the nuts and bolts of the work in particular career fields. Planning both the overall excursion as well as the individual job shadow experiences is critically important to ensure students gain maximum benefit and valuable information for green career decision-making from this relatively expensive initiative.

### PLANNING THE EXCURSION

To maximise the opportunity, the excursion should ideally be arranged for five days from Monday to Friday. The weekends on either side of this work week can be used for travel, particularly for universities located further from employers, for example, an excursion for students from University of Venda travelling to Johannesburg and Pretoria to visit a diverse range of employers.

We suggest focusing on a minimum of five careers on your excursion and no more than 10. This can allow a focus on at least one career per day or at most two, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. If you have a bigger group of students, arrange for two careers per day with one employer. This way you can split the students into two groups. One group could spend half the day with one professional and the other with another professional and then swop around after lunch. Post graduate students from North West University visited Sasol, SANBI, Golder Associates and the CSIR, Pilanesburg as well as SAEON, for example.

Consider including those careers in which your students show the most interest. Discuss their career interests during one of your lectures as you start planning the excursion and start identifying employers and careers to include. University of Venda's post graduate students were organized in three streams. The excursion was arranged around these three streams of career interest. One third of the students visited employers who offered job shadowing in bioinformatics, one third focused on conservation planning and the other third focused on conservation management.

Once you have a preliminary list of employers, proceed to contact them and make the necessary arrangements. E-mail is often the easiest way to reach most professionals. Include in your e-mail your proposal for visiting this workplace and your requirements, focusing on what is required of the professionals and the amount of time this might require from them. Timely notice and confirmation will ensure success in securing your host organisations.

## Timing the excursion

Because the excursion is a time intensive activity, the semester break in June/July of the academic year might be the best time. The March holidays might be too soon to start this discussion with students and September break might interfere with exam preparation. The June/July time frame limits interference with class and teaching time and provides a good lead time to plan the excursion from the start of the academic year.

## Selecting students for participation

It is not always possible to include all students in what is likely to be a costly excursion. Post graduate classes are often smaller and you might want to focus the excursion on this group. At this level, students are also most likely to want to explore employment options after graduating. Both University of Venda and North West University chose their post graduate student groups for participation in the excursions.

Lecturers, who know their students well, are often best suited to select for participation. Criteria you might want to consider in selecting students, include:

- **Subject specialisation**, for example an Honours class specialising in conservation management. The excursion can then focus on this particular career field. If you have more than one stream of specialisation, as in the case of the University of Venda example above, you might consider arranging an excursion for each specialized stream.

- **Academic level** could guide selection, as suggested above. Final year students exploring employment opportunities, second year students exploring potential placements for experiential learning, Honours or Masters students in a specialist stream, are some examples.

- **Academic diligence** is a common selection criterion in a university context. This could be the top achievers or those students who show dedication to academic success, for example.

- **Special consideration** could include students who need career guidance, who are undecided about an area of specialisation or students most isolated geographically from potential employers.

This list of criteria is however not exhaustive, and you might have some additional ideas for selecting students for participating in green career excursions.

## Excursion logistics

The green careers excursion is an exciting career guidance opportunity and involves much planning as above. Some additional logistics to consider include:

- **Planning your route**

Use a map to mark out the location of employers you will visit. Consider mileage between employers as you plot the route. Choose a circular route to limit the time spent travelling between employers. If your route is straight, visit some employers on the outbound journey and others on the inbound journey. University of Venda students visited the Lapalala Reserve en route to Pretoria. Or choose an excursion that goes to a central location and drive out each day to various employers. From accommodation in Pretoria, the same group visited various employers in close proximity including the Agricultural Research Council, the Johannesburg Zoo and the South African National Biodiversity Institute.

Write out an itinerary for ease of reference and for communication as you plan the excursion with your students and staff.

- **Transport**

Most universities have their own transport that would require advanced booking. In the absence of university transport, you might want to explore sponsorship for the private hire of vehicles, which can be one of the main expenses of this green careers initiative.

## ▪ Communication

Clear and detailed communication is key to the success of the green careers excursion. Provide all students with detailed communication, including:

- dates
- itinerary
- departure and expected arrival times
- nature and place of accommodation
- distances
- list of requirements that could include for example, comfortable walking shoes, sun hats, warm clothes, torches if you are planning night activities, and so on.

## ▪ Meals

In addition to basic meals, think also about in between and nighttime snacks. Packed lunches work well when travelling over the lunch period. Make provision for those with special dietary requirements. Sponsorship, for example through local supermarkets might be a consideration for meals. You could also buy the ingredients for food required and get students to prepare morning and evening meals and so build camaraderie in the group. This arrangement would require self-catering accommodation and is likely to save significant costs.

## ▪ Accommodation

Identify suitable accommodation where you are likely to stay overnight. Cost is a significant consideration. You could consider dormitory styled accommodation. Excursions over the June/July break could increase accommodation options at schools and universities. Ask your host employer to advise on suitable, low-cost accommodation in close proximity. For the brave hearted, negotiate preferential accommodation rates with some of the employers who might have accommodation options, like South African National Parks' research centre accommodation.

## ▪ Indemnity

All universities have their own systems of indemnity. Make sure that you do all the necessary to comply with these requirements.

## ▪ Chaperone

Ensure that one or more of your academic staff accompany students at all times as the responsibility of the students remains that of the university and its representatives.

## Budgeting

Given the planning checklist above, it becomes evident that the green careers excursion is likely to be costly. Think about applying to your faculty or department for the necessary budget. You could also support fundraising for the excursion. Think also about a nominal financial contribution from students to complement budgets. This could however be a disadvantage to students with less financial resources. A detailed budget will help the financial planning for your excursion.

## Briefing the host employers

The excursion is intended to provide opportunities for students to engage actively with careers in the field and workplace. Encourage your host employer and professionals to engage students in activities around key work areas in the particular careers. A half or full day would require a mix of activities that could include introductions to careers, a walk around the employer facilities, engaging in work related activities and rounding off with reflections and a question and answer session, for example. It might be useful to plan the visit to each employer carefully to ensure that students' engagement with the employer and professional is maximized. Include as much details in your briefing with the host employers so that the opportunity provides the necessary green careers information to inform decision-making.

## HOSTING THE JOB SHADOW EXPERIENCE

The excursion is an innovative way of exposing students to the finer details of careers for biodiversity. It gives students the opportunity to 'live' the career through a mini job shadow experience in the field and workplace.

The following suggestions and resources assist in planning the job shadow experience.

## Introducing your organisation

The excursion is intended to expose students to potential employers and the respective work environments. Provide students with some details of your organisation, for example, organisational objectives, the different directorates / units / programmes and some of the specifics of what and how your organisation works. You might consider conducting a tour of your work environment and introducing students to some of the work functions and people who perform these tasks.

## Setting the scene

Students are most interested in personal career stories. Allow individuals to reflect on their personal stories, some of which might resonate with students. Keep these introductions short and personal. Students enjoy career anecdotes, especially those that are entertaining and have a good outcome.

## The job shadow experience

Rather than just talk students through the details of a career, give them an opportunity to actively participate in and experience aspects of the job. Set up activities through which they get to experience the job. Some examples include:



Students with an interest in a career as a GIS Technician could collect, prepare and input data for mapping processes.



Students with an interest in being an Ecologist could collect data that might inform ecological assessments or management planning.



Students with an interest in climate change science could participate in a discussion around the implications of changing climate for example, agricultural practices and policies to secure food security.

Many more exciting opportunities can be created for the job shadow experience and if you have an environmental education division or programme they might want to help you plan appropriate action-oriented activities.

A number of [green career resources](#) have been developed to support planning your interactions with students. Some examples include 10 [green career work contexts](#) that show an illustration of the physical work environment and lists related green careers that you might find in this context. A set of [green career cards](#) also allows students to take home a resource with the more specific details of how to pursue a particular career, like subject requirements, learning pathways, potential employers, amongst other key decision-making information.

## Reflections on your job shadow programme

It is always useful to get feedback from students on the job shadow experience. Conclude the programme with reflections to generate some feedback. This will also give students the opportunity to ask any further questions.



## GREEN CAREERS LOUNGE AND GUEST LECTURE

Social networks are an important way to connect students to the world of work and job opportunities. The green careers lounge provides a social space for students to meet and interact with green career professionals and explore more specific details of different careers. It can take on various forms and is intended as an informal, relaxed space for socialising over coffee, tea, juice, and snacks and is particularly aimed at the quiet, less extroverted student.

### WHEN TO CONVENE THE GREEN CAREERS LOUNGE

The green careers lounge is relatively easy to organise and is a fun way of accessing careers information. You could probably convene more than one lounge through the academic year, perhaps one per quarter and so cover a broad scope of possible careers for biodiversity. It would require some forward planning, mostly to secure the time of professionals whom you would want to invite to interact with students. Other logistics are relatively easy to arrange.

When deciding on a date or dates for your green careers lounge, explore a few dates that give your prospective guest(s) options.

A late afternoon or early evening lounge is less likely to interfere with classes and tutorials. If most of your students live in residence, an after-supper coffee lounge might be a good time. Bear in mind though that inputs from outside professionals might be more difficult to secure at this time.

## WHERE TO CONVENE YOUR CAREERS LOUNGE

Talk to staff at your faculty, careers centre or student centre to secure a comfortable space to accommodate the number of people that you have in mind. Make timeous bookings for this space as you may also want to use the details in advertising your lounge.

## ADVERTISING YOUR CAREERS LOUNGE

The green careers lounge does not have to be limited to students in the natural sciences. Green careers are options across multiple disciplines. Advertise your lounge throughout campus. You might be surprised by the response, especially if the menu is used as an attraction. Some means of advertising include all or some of:

- Lecturer announcements during class time
- Billboard posters across the campus
- Faculty or department notice boards
- Electronic circulation of notices
- Flyers handed out on campus

Whichever form you choose, prepare a well worded and catchy invitation. Include a programme of activities and inputs. Circulate your notice and programme to all who will assist with marketing the event.

## PLANNING YOUR PROGRAMME

Decide on what form your green careers lounge will take. There are many options to choose from that provide opportunity for students to meet and interact with biodiversity professionals, in a relaxed and casual setting, which include:

### Guest lectures

These can attract a good crowd for learning about green careers. It does however limit the time for social interaction between the students, particularly the more introverted student and the guest lecturer(s). If you choose this form, plan some time after the structured lecture for students to interact with the lecturer(s). You could invite more than one guest lecturer to provide inputs on different careers, and after formal presentations, plan for a short period for coffee and snacks to allow for the social interactions.

## Panel discussion

As an alternative to the guest lecture, you could invite professionals to make inputs on green careers through participation in a green careers panel. Use the [green career work contexts](#) to select professionals from different career fields to offer diversity.

To help guide the panel discussion and the participants' preparation, prepare a set of questions for each of the panellists through which to elicit careers information. Share this with the panellists ahead of the event so that they can ponder and prepare responses. You could elicit questions from students through a suggestions box or notice board and formulate the questions for the panellists from this list. Allow some time for open ended questions from the floor at the end of the panel discussion. For both the guest lecture or panel discussion, invite a few different employers from your own network or university alumni.

## Coffee and cocktail evening

You might also want to consider partner organisations' with which you work to informally meet and talk with students at a social coffee / cocktail evening.

Think about the employers and careers that students would be most interested in hearing more about. Invite students to give inputs about areas of interest for example, through a suggestions box, lecturer or a notice board list to add to or tick off. You could use the [green career work contexts](#) to organise the annual programme and or create a list to guide selection choices of students.

## CONTACTING PROFESSIONALS FOR INPUTS

Email requests are often the most efficient for contacting professionals, who often have very busy work schedules, to make inputs into your guest lectures or careers lounge. Timeous notice and confirmation will ensure success in securing the guest lecturer for your careers event. A clear brief, including dates, time, venue, format, specific information required and a contact person to refer any queries are some of the key aspects to include in your communication. Provide as much detail as possible, but not too much that it discourages the potential guest lecturer.

You might want to use the framework of the [green career cards](#) to guide the guest lecturer in structuring a useful presentation. Some further guidance can be provided to the prospective guest lecturer, as below.

## PRESENTING THE GREEN CAREERS GUEST LECTURE

Visual resources are often a useful complement in delivering a verbal presentation about green careers information. You might want to make some suggestion in this regard. In power point presentations, people relate and respond well to slides that are more visual and less text heavy. Suggest the use of icons, images, and pictures that relate to the careers being presented. You might want to share the [green career resources](#) with your guest lecturers.

Students are often most interested in personal career journeys. Advise your guest lecturer to keep the inputs personal and share experiences of career growth and development. Students enjoy career anecdotes so include lots of these. Leave sufficient time at the end for students to engage with the guest lecturer through questions and comments.

Video clips bring careers to life for both the student and lecturer. It might be useful to request the presentation ahead of time to test it on your university system and limit any delays in most valuable time for both the guest lecturer and students.

## STUDENT PRESENTERS AT CAREER LOUNGES

Professionals are often very busy, and it might be difficult to secure their time. Remote universities are less accessible to some professionals. Although web-based platforms offer various options, personal interactions are often best. And in the absence of a guest lecturer, students can also do well to make these inputs on green careers. Some ideas include:

- **Student research and inputs** – Convene your green careers lounge around inputs from the student body. Select a group of students interested in researching details about specific careers. They could share their findings with a broader student group at the green careers lounge, either informally or through a panel discussion.
- **Open discussions** – Convene your green careers lounge as an open discussion forum amongst students. The only limitation with this format is that little new knowledge is likely to filter into the discussion. You could use students or groups of students to interview professionals and, in this way, minimise this limitation.



## GREEN CAREER EXHIBITIONS

Exhibitions are very popular for sharing careers information, particularly on college and university campuses, for students, but also for school learners visiting on open days. These offer informal spaces where learners and students can engage with information at their own pace and on their own. However, our experience of career fairs indicates significant value in having a knowledgeable, younger professional manning the exhibition and interacting with students and learners to whom they can easily relate. Exhibitions are also very useful at career centres on campuses, or a school library or notice board if space allows.

### SHARING GREEN CAREERS INFORMATION AT CAREER CENTRES

The **green careers exhibition banner** provides a useful visual depiction of all the options for green careers. It can be easily mounted on a wall or notice board in or around a career centre, related departments and faculties or school classrooms. The individual **green career work contexts**, clipped from the banner, are also useful to display in smaller spaces that might not accommodate the banner.

A set of **green career posters** also provide useful information to be displayed on notice boards. They show specific careers for biodiversity with some detail of what the job entails, useful study fields and potential employers.

The **green career cards** have been developed with even more detail about particular careers. They are colour coded into groups of careers that relate to particular work contexts and are useful take away resources for learners and students for future reference. A useful addition to the suggested displays above is to scatter the cards in different work categories on a table underneath or alongside

the notice board display. However, if you want to better manage the distribution of the career cards which are probably a bit more expensive to produce, refer learners and students to specific people with whom they can discuss these careers further. These individuals can then hold the stock of cards and share more specific career cards with learners and students based on their discussions.

## SETTING UP A GREEN CAREERS OPEN DAY EXHIBITION

Open days, as they are typically referred to, or career days are widely used at universities to connect students to careers information and job opportunities. All universities host one of these at least once a year in varying formats. Some focus generally on all careers where exhibitors take up the opportunity to exhibit these. Others are organised around careers related to particular faculties, for example, the University of Free State hosts a career day specifically for the Agricultural and Natural Sciences faculty. Some are also organised around job opportunities and graduate development programmes.

Regardless of the format, the **banner**, **work contexts**, **posters** and **career cards** as discussed above can be used. These provide various options for creating a backdrop to a green careers' exhibition stand, serving also as a conversation point. All these resources can be printed, the banner in two different sizes. The posters and work contexts can be laminated to increase its durability. Though very beautiful as displays, these can however be costly to print. You could consider printing only one of these, for example the banner, and then display the other resources on external monitors that are likely to attract the attention of visitors for further conversation.

The colourful career cards, organised according to the different work contexts, provide good resources to decorate the table, and as a reference for discussions with visitors to the stand. Print enough of these cards. Our experience shows that students value the resource to which they can refer at a later stage when they engage with decision-making processes about green careers.

A critical addition to the career open day or expo is an exhibitor, knowledgeable about the full spectrum of green careers. This could be an environmental educator, a lecturer or a postgraduate student who has already undertaken their own green careers research. The resources listed however, also provides enough information for the novice exhibitor, so experience need not be a prerequisite.



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are illiterate has increased from 400 million to 600 million.

It is not only the illiterate who are at risk of being left behind in the new global economy. The world's population is growing rapidly, and the number of people who are poor is increasing. In 1990, there were 1.2 billion people living on less than \$2 a day. By 2000, that number had risen to 1.5 billion, and by 2010, it is expected to reach 2 billion. The world's population is also becoming more diverse, with a growing number of people from different cultures and backgrounds living together in the same countries.

These challenges are not insurmountable, but they do require a concerted effort from all of us. We need to work together to create a world that is more just, more equitable, and more sustainable. We need to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to thrive. We need to create a world where everyone has a chance to succeed.

Education is the key to creating a better world. It is the foundation of a strong and sustainable society. It is the only way to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to thrive. Education is the only way to create a world where everyone has a chance to succeed.

Let us work together to create a world where everyone has the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to thrive. Let us work together to create a world where everyone has a chance to succeed. Let us work together to create a world where everyone has a chance to thrive.

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